



**WHEN EDDIE AND ALEX** Van Halen began their musical careers in The Broken Combs in the early 1970s, nobody could have had any idea that by the end of the decade these two Dutch boys would have become globe-straddlingly famous as half of *the* quintessential American rock'n'roll band.

**VAN HALEN** were rooted in the stadium majesty of Led Zeppelin, Deep Purple and The Who. But they added some good old-fashioned Yankee razzmatazz

to the party, not to mention an ear for a hummable melody and live energy to burn. The formula served them well. The first major incarnation of Van Halen, who were originally known as Mammoth, featured Eddie Van Halen on guitar, David Lee Roth on vocals, Alex Van Halen on drums and Michael Anthony on bass. Between 1974 and 1985 they rose from playing backyard parties in California to become one of the world's biggest acts. There were rumours of ego-fuelled fights along the way, but the friction between

David and Eddie in particular helped create music that was undeniably brilliant; edgy yet accessible.

**ROTH'S OUTSTANDING** showmanship and Eddie's extraordinary guitar playing made this version of Van Halen the definitive line-up as far as *Rock Candy* is concerned. Various incarnations of the band followed that 1985 split – most notably with Sammy Hagar doing his thing out front – with varying degrees of success. But nothing has ever quite captured the magic that those

four guys produced on Van Halen's first six albums.

**OUR 14-page** tribute to VH MK I includes a revealing interview with the band's manager at the time, Noel Monk, a fascinating profile of David Lee Roth by renowned *Rock Candy* writer Mick Wall and an exclusive piece with Steve Vai, where the legendary guitarist explains exactly why Eddie is such a musical genius. Why have we dedicated so much space to Van Halen? Because to our mind they *are* rock'n'roll!





Van Halen, 1978 vintage. L-R: Alex Van Halen (drums), Michael Anthony (bass), David Lee Roth (vocals), Eddie Van Halen (guitar)

**“YOU DON'T PUT THE LEAD SINGER IN A STRAITJACKET... IT'S NOT DONE!”**



BETWEEN 1978 AND 1984 **NOEL MONK** WAS AS CLOSE TO **VAN HALEN** AS ANYBODY. ACTING FIRST AS TOUR MANAGER, THEN AS THE BAND'S MANAGER, MONK WITNESSED THE MADNESS OF THE GROUP'S ASTONISHING RISE TO SUPERSTAR STATUS. SO WHAT WAS IT REALLY LIKE INSIDE THE VH BUBBLE? JON HOTTEN ASKS HIM...

**A PROTÉGÉ OF LEGENDARY U.S.** promoter Bill Graham, Noel E. Monk helped to stage-manage the Woodstock Festival and went on to work with huge bands like the Grateful Dead and the Rolling Stones. He'd just finished a spell on the road with the Sex Pistols of all people when Warner Bros asked him to join with Van Halen as their tour manager in 1978. He became the band's manager a year later, a position he held until 1985. Now a resident of Colorado Springs, Noel has published two books, *12 Days On The Road: The Sex Pistols In America* and *Running With The Devil: A Backstage Pass To The Wild Times, Loud Rock, And The Down And Dirty Truth Behind The Making Of Van Halen*. His 2017 Van Halen book offers a unique insight into the early workings of the band.

**YOUR BOOK RUNNING WITH THE DEVIL IS REALLY ONE OF THE FIRST INSIDER ACCOUNTS OF VAN HALEN. THERE'S STILL A SENSE OF MYSTERY ABOUT THOSE EARLY YEARS...**

“That's true. There's very little known about that time and we wanted it that way. There wasn't a lot we wanted out there in the public domain. My book is absolutely what happened, as was my book about the Sex Pistols. I consider them history books. And you don't mess around with history.”

**DID YOU HAVE TO THINK LONG AND HARD BEFORE YOU DECIDED ABOUT THAT LEVEL OF DISCLOSURE?**

“No, I planned to do the book, but I wanted to see where Van Halen went. Plus it took me 10 years to find someone who could write with me.”

**CAN YOU REMEMBER WHEN YOU FIRST SAW THE BAND?**

“I basically didn't hear about them until I came off the Sex Pistols tour in early 1978. And Carl Scott, who was head of artist development at Warner Bros, said, ‘I've got this new band...’ To me it was just another job. But Carl said, ‘No, no... They're brilliant.’ The first time I met them was in a restaurant in Pasadena, and then a month later in Chicago when we started the tour. From there I spent over seven years with them.”

**HOW QUICKLY DID YOU SUSS OUT THE INTERNAL DYNAMICS OF THE BAND?**

“Ah, that was pretty easy. When you're dealing with a band, it's not difficult to get a feel for what they are. Unfortunately, they went from being a nice bunch of guys, a brilliant, brilliant guitar player and a frontman who was incredible... to seven years later when I had a bunch of egotistical, alcoholic, coke freaks...”

**WHAT WAS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EDDIE AND DAVID LIKE? WERE THEY ALWAYS BATTLING TO BE THE PUBLIC FACE OF THE BAND?**

“It wasn't a battle. They had maybe a battle in the studio over musical directions. And whatever they did backstage... I don't care how messed up they were, they never did a bad show for me. Except of course for the US festival [in 1983]. You pay us a million and a half [then the highest fee ever paid for a single concert appearance], and we're gonna screw it up...”

**DAVID HAD AN OVERWHELMING PERSONALITY...**

“You don't mean an egomaniac?”

**NO, MORE THAT WHEN HE WALKED INTO A ROOM, YOU KNEW HE WAS THERE...**

“Ah, yes... I loved it. The only people I could let do phone interviews were David and Alex. Edward, by two in the afternoon, couldn't get out of bed. Michael didn't have much to say. But don't think that David didn't think up his great lines in advance. ‘Do you see the lights coming atcha...?’ ‘Look at all the people here tonight...’ People think it was on the spur of the moment, but it really took him a long time to get those licks together. He was inventing himself as he went along, and he was the brightest of the bunch. David's problem was that it was like flipping a coin, and you didn't know whether heads or tails would come up. If tails came up, you ran out of the room. If heads came up you had a nice time. There was no in-between. He was either hellacious or a really nice guy.”

**HOW DID YOU DEAL WITH HIM WHEN HE WAS HELLACIOUS?**

“We put him in a straitjacket. That actually happened once when I was back in LA at the beginning of a tour. The tour manager called me and said,



**“EDDIE WAS BRILLIANT. I CAN'T TELL YOU HOW GOOD. AND THEY USED TO SAY, ‘DAVID CAN'T SING.’ WELL HE'S A ROCK'N'ROLL SINGER – HE DOESN'T NEED TO GO OUT THERE AND DELIVER AN ARIA!”**

**NOEL MONK**

‘We have a problem... we had to put David in a straitjacket...’ Oh yeah, what did he do? ‘He was drunk and he threw everything out of his hotel room...’ Well, he'd done that before. So I asked who put him in the straitjacket? The guy says, ‘Two or three bodyguards.’ I said, ‘Man, just sit on him... You don't put the lead singer in a straitjacket...’ It's not done. I flew right out there. I went to David's room. There was nothing in there except the bed. The rest of the room's contents were outside the hotel. He [David] was pretty demoralised. I'm claustrophobic, and I would have killed not to be put in a straitjacket. I felt really sorry for David, and he didn't deserve that. We lost the road manager at the end of the tour. At the end of the day, it's another story from the road...”

**DAVID HAD A VERY WEALTHY BACKGROUND, WHEREAS ALEX AND EDDIE'S FATHER WAS A JOBBING MUSICIAN. WAS THAT A FACTOR IN HOW DIFFERENT THEY ALL WERE?**

“Well Nathan Roth [David's father] was a great guy. He was a really successful ophthalmologist, and he made all his money. He didn't get it passed down or anything like that. And David didn't flaunt his money. I don't think that was a factor.”

**EDDIE WAS, WITHIN A VERY SHORT SPACE OF TIME, REVERED BY MANY PEOPLE AS A GUITAR PLAYER...**

“He still is, of course. His fans have shrines to him, and to the band. Who can collect the most paraphernalia? Whole rooms dedicated to nothing but Van Halen. They have places where they talk about minutia. It's like a soap opera. At his best, Eddie was brilliant for Van Halen. I can't tell you how good. And they used to say, ‘David can't sing.’ Well he's a rock'n'roll singer – he doesn't need to go out there and deliver an aria! He was a perfect frontman and a perfect singer for that band. I



EVH: “His fans have shrines to him”

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